Ecosystem Restoration Program Focus Group

Mission Statement

The mission of the Ecosystem Restoration Program Focus Group is to assist CALFED in the period prior to the Record of Decision to identify, address and resolve key policy issues associated with the ERP and its implementation.

Paramount issues to be addressed by the Focus Group include:

1. How to better integrate the ERP with other CALFED and CALFED-associated programs;

2. How to develop a framework for setting priorities, selecting ERP actions and making adaptive management work in order to establish a science-based program; and

3. How to better define success, as described in quantifiable objectives and performance measures.

The Focus Group may choose to discuss and address additional policy issues related to the ERP, such as Work Plan structure and Program documents.

Ecosystem Restoration Program Focus Group

Focus Group Members

Margit Aramburu	Delta Protection Commission
Gary Bobker	The Bay Institute
Mike Bonner	Army Corps of Engineers
Byron M. Buck	California Urban Water Agencies
Steve Johnson	The Nature Conservancy
Dan Keppen	Northern California Water Association
Laura King	San Luis Delta Mendota Water Authority
Patrick Leonard	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Frank Wernette	California Dept. of Fish and Game
Tim Ramirez	Resources Agency
Robin Reynolds	California Dept. of Food and Agriculture
Peter Rhoads	Metropolitan Water District
Lawrence Smith	U.S. Geological Survey
Gary Stern	National Marine Fisheries Service
Leo Winternitz	Department of Water Resources
Steve Yaeger	Army Corps of Engineers
Carolyn Yale	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

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Ground Rules

In carrying out its work, the Focus Group will rely on the brief set of ground rules outlined below:

1. <u>Group Composition</u> - The Focus Group will be comprised of CALFED agency, agricultural, environmental, and urban representatives specifically invited by CALFED. All meetings will be open to the public, but discussion may be limited to invited participants only.

2. <u>Meeting Format</u> - Focus Group meetings will be conducted in a manner that fosters productive discussions and an open exchange of ideas. To promote such an atmosphere: a) meetings will be facilitated by a neutral party (CONCUR, Inc.); b) the project team will strive to distribute agendas and related materials in advance of Focus Group meetings; c) participants will be encouraged to communicate their interests, share relevant information and move beyond their usual roles and positions in order to work collaborative to develop creative solutions; d) disagreements will be regarded as problems to be solved rather than battles to be won; and, e) members will respect the personal integrity, values, and legitimacy of the interests of each participant.

3. <u>Commitment</u> - Focus Group members will commit to attending and actively participating in scheduled meetings. As continuity is a critical element of success, alternates are strongly discouraged. Additionally, to ensure that the Focus Group can work through pressing issues in a timely manner, participants agree to commit the necessary resources (i.e., time, information, other agency/organization staff) to help address and resolve issues proposed to be the focus of future discussions.

4. <u>Time Frame</u> - The Focus Group will meet every four to six weeks between October 22, 1999 and February 2000. Meetings may continue beyond February 2000, as needed.

5. <u>Subcommittees</u> - Informal subcommittees (consisting of Focus Group members and, as appropriate, technical staff) may be commissioned by the Focus Group to tackle specific issues and develop draft products between Focus Group meetings. Any work products developed by a subcommittee will be discussed and revised by the full Focus Group.

6. <u>Products</u> - Any work product (interim and/or final) will be conveyed as informal guidance to CALFED.

7. <u>Staffing</u> - Responsibility for staffing the Focus Group will be shared by a team of CALFED staff, CALFED Agency personnel and consultants (Michael Fainter, Bruce DiGennaro, Doug Morrison and CONCUR). B. DiGennaro will be the principal point of contact.

Progress Report on Subteam Activity

The following briefly summarizes Subteam activity and progress since the October 22, 1999 ERP Focus Group meeting. This report is as of 11/16/99.

Team 1 - Integration

Overall Focus:	Integrating the ERP Program with other CALFED and CALFED-associated activities (such as the Corps Comprehensive Study), to facilitate development of one consistent blueprint for ecosystem restoration.
Initial Task:	Develop an inventory of potential conflicts and synergies between the various programs that involve restoration, identify key policy issues associated with specific conflicts and synergies, and prioritize "conflicts/synergies" for Focus Group deliberation.
Participants:	Daniel, DiGennaro, Guillen, Johnson, Keppen, Kie, Leonard, Morrison, Reynolds, Wernett, Yale.

Conference Calls: 11/4/99

Activity/Discussions to Date:
- Using an initial list of potential conflicts and synergies, the group identified four broad categories as possible areas of focus: (1) ERP and Flood Management/Land Management; (2) ERP and In-Delta Levees (including conveyance capacity); (3) ERP and Water Transfers/Management; and (4) ERP and Instream Flows.
- The group discussed considering conflicts between ERP and Ag Resources Policy, but concluded that this could be addressed somewhat as a component of the categories listed above (particularly #1) and that the broader policy issue was being dealt with in other forums.

Proposed Next Steps:
- Identify key policy issues associated with identified conflicts/synergies and prioritize conflicts/synergies for Focus Group deliberations.

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Team 1a - ERP and Regulatory Compliance

Overall Focus: How does the ERP relate to regulatory compliance activity (including mitigation), and how does this relationship influence priority setting? What would the "one blueprint" concept look like/require from a regulatory perspective.

Initial Task(s):
1. Develop a better understanding on MSCS/ERP linkages, and discuss approaches to better integrating the programs (including possible merger into one program).
2. Circulate information regarding recovery plans and recovery planning process (to inform #3 below).
3. Discuss whether or not the ERP should be developed as the Recovery Plan(s) for ESA compliance, including the potential merits, pros and cons, and obstacles associated with such a proposal.

Participants: Aramburu, Beale, Bronson, DiGennaro, Johnson, Kie, Leonard, Reynolds, Rhoads, Stern.

Conference Calls: 11/10/99, 11/15/99

Activity/Discussions to Date:
- We should take a broad view when looking at regulatory compliance, including, but not limited to: ESA, CESA, CEQA, FERC, and Flood Control/Reclamation Board actions.
- We should focus on ensuring/promoting one comprehensive, coordinated approach to ecosystem restoration (i.e. one blueprint), part of which is defined by regulatory activity/actions.
- The ERP, MSCS, and regulatory proposals for flows/operational rules, should be integrated to facilitate a uniform, coordinated set of actions (consistent with above).
- Discussed CALFED's Regulatory Streamling efforts and determined that this is somewhat different than what Team 1a is interested in.

Proposed Next Steps:
Explore and begin to define what is needed to facilitate and achieve one coordinated, comprehensive program, particularly with regard to regulatory needs/issues (i.e. how can we make the "one blueprint" concept a reality? What's needed?).

Team 2 - Adaptive Management and Priority Setting

<u>Overall Focus:</u>	Assist in developing a framework for long-term priority setting and adaptive management within CALFED by providing guidance on how to balance scientific, regulatory, political/administrative, and socioeconomic priorities. Focus on policy issues rather than science, and process rather than governance.

<u>Initial Task(s):</u>

1. Outline the key elements of an adaptive management process articulated in the following efforts: Ecosystem Roundtable, CMARP, ERP Strategic Plan, other. Highlight similarities and differences. (Smith, Winternitz)
2. Develop an initial list of critical questions the Work Team will need to engage and resolve to develop a priorities-setting process. (Bobker, Yale, Morrison, CONCUR)

<u>Participants:</u>   Bobker, Brooks, DiGennaro, Fainter, McCreary, Morrison, Reynolds, Rhoads, Ripperda, Smith, Stern, Winternitz, Yale.

<u>Conference Calls:</u> 11/9/99, 11/22/99 scheduled

<u>Activity/Discussions to Date:</u>
- Work Team discussions have centered on determining what concrete guidance and work product the Focus Group can develop -- for both priority setting and adaptive management -- within a roughly four-month timeframe.
- Work Team has focused on two areas:
  1. Outlining the elements of a successful adaptive management program. (In other words, what steps/mechanics are necessary to make an adaptive management program operational.)
  2. Developing the outline of a priorities-setting process that provides a mechanism for identifying and balancing various criteria(ecological benefit, information value, public support/implementability)to be used in shaping ERP projects/actions.

<u>Proposed Next Steps:</u>
- Continue to work on the above two noted areas.

Team 3 - Objectives

Overall Focus: Provide policy guidance on how to define measurable objectives and determine defensible targets for the ERP Program, including approaches for identifying information gaps and reducing uncertainty.

Initial Task: Categorize existing ERP objectives according to their level of definition and measurability and discuss needs for clarification and refinement.

Participants: Bobker, DiGennaro, Morrison, Reynolds, Wernett, Yale.

Conference Calls: 11/15/99, 11/19/99 scheduled

Activity/Discussions to Date:
- Focus on developing a better understanding of the existing objectives.
- Characterizing the objectives would allow for focus on those objectives needing the most work, including those needing policy direction.
- Objectives could be characterized according to whether they have defined attributes (that could be measured) and whether or not the value for the objective has been defined.

Proposed Next Steps:
- Provide input/guidance on the development/refinement of strategic objectives.
- Identify objectives that may require additional policy input/direction to move forward.